

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 302210Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0064
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

S E C R E T SAN JOSE 1745

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINS CS
SUBJECT: REPORTED PLOT TO OVERTHROW ODUBER GOVERNMENT

REF: SAN JOSE 773

1. PRESIDENT ODUBER CALLED ME TO CASA PRESIDENCIAL
APRIL 29 TO GIVE ME FOLLOWING ADVANCE INFORMATION ON
ACTIVITIES OF FORMER PRESIDENT FIGUERES WHICH HE THOUGHT
COULD RESULT IN DISTURBANCES AT ANY TIME.
2. ODUBER SAID FOR SOME TIME NOW FIGUERES HAS BEEN
TELLING INTIMATES THAT DETERIORATING SITUATION IN COSTA
RICA SHOWS THAT DEMOCRACY IS NOT WORKING AND THAT THE
SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE CHANGED. FIGUERES HAS CONTENDED THAT
THE FAULT MIGHT LIE IN THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM ITSELF SINCE
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES WERE NOT AT ALL
FAVORABLE TO THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY. ON THE OTHER
HAND, FIGUERES' OBSERVATION OF DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTRIES
LIKE ROMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA SUGGESTED THAT TIGHTLY-
CONTROLLED SYSTEM WORKS AND PERHPAS EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE
TO CHANGE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT ALONG THOSE LINES.

3. LAST WEEK FIGUERES CALLED FACIO AND PRESENTED SIMILAR
THESIS TO HIM, ADDING THAT SINCE RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS PLANNING
COUP IN COSTA RICA WITHIN NZXT THREE MONTHS OR SO, IT WOULD BE
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BEST FOR RULING LIBERATION PARTY TO MAKE PREEMPTIVE MOVE AND

BRING ABOUT ITS OWN COUP. FIGUERES SUGGESTED THAT BEST WAY TO DO THIS WOULD BE FOR ODUBER TO RESIGN VOLUNTARILY. WHEN FACIO EXPRESSED DOUBTS ODUBER WOULD DO SO, FIGUERES SAID THAT LIBERATION PARTY SHOULD BRING HIM DOWN. ODUBER ALSO QUOTED FIGUERES AS SAYING THAT IF ODUBER DOES NOT GIVE UP POWER, HE MAY NOT LAST LONG (PHYSICALLY).

4. EVENING AFTER FIGUERES/FACIO MEETING, VESCO MET WITH FACIO AND STATED HE HAD HEARD OF FIGUERES' OPINION THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE CHANGED AND WONDERED WHAT WERE FACIO'S VIEWS. HOWEVER, VESCO OSTENSIBLY RECEIVED NO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FACIO. ODUBER THINKS THAT VESCO IS INTERESTED IN SEEING HIS GOVERNMENT OVERTHROWN AND FIGUERES INSTALLED BECAUSE VESCO HAS NO HOLD ON ODUBER AND DOES NOT FEEL THAT HE CAN GET THE KIND OF PROTECTION THAT FIGUERES WOULD GIVE.

5. ODUBER WAS SUFFICIENTLY WORRIED ABOUT EXTENT OF FIGUERES' ACTIVITIES THAT HE INFORMED GENERAL TORRIJOS DURING LATTER'S VISIT APRIL 24. FOLLOWING LONG TALK WITH FIGUERES, TORRIJOS TOLD ODUBER THAT FIGUERES APPEARS SOMEWHAT SENILE AND THAT PATIENCE SHOULD BE EXERCISED WITH HIM.

6. ODUBER SAID THERE ARE REPORTS THAT DR. BURSTIN, EDITOR OF EXCELSIOR AND HIMSELF A POWER-HUNGRY PERSON, HAS BEEN ADMINISTERING AMPHETAMINES TO FIGUERES FOR SOME TIME WITH RESULT THAT FIGUERES HAS ALTERNATE PERIODS OF HIGHS AND DEPRESSIONS. ODUBER REMARKED ON THE FACT THAT FIGUERES NOW WEARS A MILITARY UNIFORM ON MANY OCCASIONS. HE SAID FIGUERES IS OBSESSED BY FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE A SUCCESS OF ANY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AND HAS LOST SOME US\$10 MILLION IN VARIOUS VENTURES OVER THE LAST SIX TO SEVEN YEARS, INCLUDING ABOUT A MILLION DOLLARS WHICH THE SOVIETS ARE RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE GIVEN HIM, PROBABLY IN ORDER TO BUY RECOGNITION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EMBASSY.

7. ODUBER SAID HE INTENDS TO REMAIN CALM AND NOT TAKE ANY ACTION HIMSELF AT THIS TIME. HE WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID ANY ACTION WHICH WOULD TEND TO SPLIT THE PARTY AND VERY LIKELY HARM THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, HE HAS ASKED THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY TO WATCH THE SITUATION VERY CARE-

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FULLY. HE WANTED ME TO KNOW ABOUT THIS BECAUSE HE EXPECTS THAT GIVEN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO WHOM FIGUERES HAS BEEN SPEAKING IT MAY SOON BECOME WIDELY KNOWN. FURTHERMORE, ODUBER HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHEN OR WHAT FIGUERES MIGHT DO TO CARRY OUT SOME MAD SCHEME. ODUBER PROMISED TO KEEP ME INFORMED OF ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON THIS MATTER.

8. ODUBER SAID HE WAS ALSO THINKING ABOUT INFORMING SOMOZA

SINCE IT THERE IS ANY TROUBLE, THERE IS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES BECOMING SOMEHOW INVOLVED. THEREFORE, IT IS BEST FOR THEM TO KNOW IN ADVANCE.

9. COMMENT: DURING THE SEVEN WEEKS THAT I HAVE BEEN HERE, FIGUERES HAS TAKEN PUBLIC EXCEPTION TO A NUMBER OF ODUBER'S POLICY STATEMENTS. THUS, THERE IS NO LACK OF PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THEIR DISAGREEMENT ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. IT IS ALSO WELL KNOWN THAT THE RULING LIBERATION PARTY IS DIVIDED INTO PRO-ODUBER AND PRO-FIGUERES CAMPS AND THAT FIGUERES STILL INSISTS ON PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE IN DETERMINING COSTA RICAN DEVELOPMENTS. SOME FIGUERES STATEMENTS HAVE ALSO BEEN INTERPRETED AS CLEAR INDICATION THAT HE IS INTERESTED IN RUNNING THE COUNTRY AGAIN AND MIGHT BE PREPARED TO SEEK A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT FOR THAT PURPOSE. ONE FORMER FIGUERES MINISTER TOLD ME THAT THE FIGUERES WING OF THE PARTY IS DISSATISFIED WITH ODUBER'S PERFORMANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH HE IS ALLOWING A LEFIST CAST TO BE INTRODUCED INTO GOVERNMENT POLICIES. HE SAID THAT PRESSURES WOULD BE BROUGHT TO FORCE ODUBER TO CHANGE OR TO BRING ABOUT HIS DOWNFALL. FIGUERES' PRESENT MOVES MIGHT BE PART OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN TO PRESSURE ODUBER INTO MAKING CHANGES ACCEPTABLE TO THE FIGUERES WING OF THE PARTY. MAYBE THIS IS AS FAR AS THINGS WILL GO AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, THE SITUATION IS UNSETTLED AND, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF ODUBER'S REACTIONS, WILL CONTINUE TO BEAR CLOSE WATCHING.

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